

Pinworms

Last Revised: 10/2001

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Pinworms are tiny worms that live in the lower intestine of people. Most often at night, female worms come out to the anus of an infected person and lay their microscopic eggs.

Who gets this disease?

Anyone can. It is particularly common in preschool and school-aged children and therefore in day care centers.

How is it spread?

Pinworm eggs can be transferred by hand directly from anus-to-mouth of the infected individual or to another person. The eggs can also be transferred indirectly through clothing, bedding, food or other contaminated articles.

What are the symptoms?

People may be without symptoms or they may have anal itching, feel irritable and/or have disturbed sleep.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear between two-weeks and two-months. The life cycle requires two to six weeks to be completed.

Can a person have this disease without knowing it?

Yes. Often, members of an infected child's household are also unknowingly infected and, if not treated, can reinfect a treated child and other people.

What is the treatment?

There are several medicines available to treat this infection. Often healthcare providers will treat the entire family if one member of the home is infected.

How can the spread of this disease be

prevented?

1. Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet and after diapering children.
2. Wash hands thoroughly before preparing foods.
3. If you suspect a child has pinworms, based on symptoms, this child should see a physician for the correct diagnosis and treatment.
4. Each child's dirty clothing should be stored separately in plastic bags and sent home for laundering.
5. All bedding and clothing should be washed in **HOT** water.
6. Every child should have his/her own crib or mat and should not switch sheets with other children. Mats should be kept clean.
7. Clean and vacuum play and sleeping areas daily for several days after diagnosis.

Who should be excluded?

Once the diagnosis of pinworms is made, the child should be appropriately treated. After the treatment the child does not need to be kept out of child care.

Reportable?

No, Pinworms are not reportable by New Hampshire law. However, the Bureau public health nurses are available for consultation.